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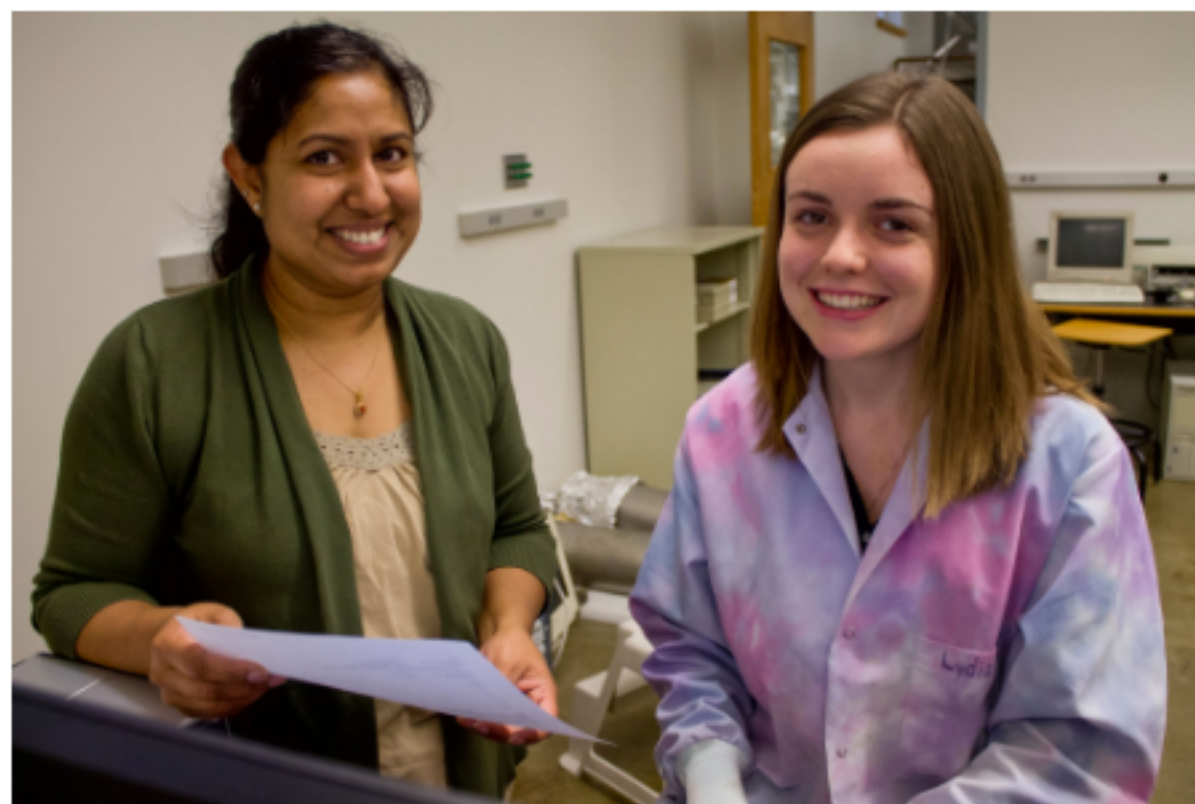
Perera to Receive Early Career Award

March 29, 2017

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— Illinois Wesleyan University's Manori Perera has been selected as an inaugural recipient of the ACS Illinois Heartland Early Career Chemist Award.

Perera is assistant professor of [chemistry](#) and one of two inaugural recipients of the Early Career Chemist Award, which recognizes outstanding scientific contributions of early career scientists to the field of chemistry. The award is presented by the [Illinois Heartland American Chemical Society](#), a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to providing science education opportunities to the community. The Illinois Heartland American Chemical Society, which includes 240 chemists, chemical engineers, and educators in an 11-county area in central Illinois, is a local chapter of the [American Chemical Society \(ACS\)](#), the world's largest scientific society.

"I didn't expect that I would win since the Heartland area has quite a number of institutions," said Perera, who said she was both surprised and honored to receive the award.



Criley Student Research Fellow Lydia Rudd '16 (right) worked under the faculty mentorship of Manori Perera, who said she enjoys encouraging the next wave of scientists.



Assistant Professor Manori Perera (right) supervised Eckley Scholar Justyna Koscielniak '14 in her design of instruments to study chemical reactions and the dynamics of space molecules in the lab

Perera's colleagues nominated her for the award for her research, which extends from studying reactions of astrochemistry to understanding antioxidant properties of tea and wine. Because of Illinois Wesleyan's strong research culture, Perera explained that she had the opportunity to publish her research while working in close collaboration with her students.

"Our university contributes to faculty development and to student scholarship," said Perera, who received her Ph.D. in physical chemistry from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. "I was fortunate to be a part of this culture and this was especially important to me as a junior faculty. I feel honored that my research was recognized through this award."

Perera spent two years as a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign prior to working at Illinois Wesleyan. She said the opportunities students at Illinois Wesleyan have as undergraduates in conducting and publishing research are unique to the University.

"I am very proud of our research because all the work is done by undergraduate students," she said. "An undergraduate student doesn't get to publish a paper as a first author or get the opportunity to build an instrument at large research universities. I enjoy sharing these experiences with my students and encouraging the next wave of scientists through my work."